

Message Text

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S E C R E T HELSINKI 2421

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, PCAT, US, UR, XJ, XM
SUBJ: US-SOVIET CAT: REPORTING CABLE ON FOURTH MEETING OF REGIONAL
WORKING GROUP, JULY 27, 1978

REF: HELSINKI 2419

SUMMARY: US POSED QUESTIONED TO SOVIETS ON APPLICATIONS OF THEIR
CRITERIA TO AFRICA WHICH THEY HAD DIFFICULTY IN ANSWERING, LEAD-
ING THEM TO ASSERT AND THEN RETRACT THEORY THAT AID TO VICTIMS
OF AGGRESSION TOOK PRIORITY OVER VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
SOVIETS STRONGLY QUESTIONED REACTION OF AFRICAN FRONT
LINE STATES TO SUPERPOWER DEMARCHE ON ARMS RESTRAINT AND
PROMISED TO PROPOSE OTHER REGIONS FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT CAT
ROUND. END SUMMARY.

1. FINAL MEETING REGIONAL WORKING GROUP (RWG) DEVOTED ALMOST
ENTIRELY TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS RAISED BY BOTH SIDES. US
(MATHEWS) BEGAN BY ASKING TWO QUESTIONS ON HOW SOVIETS WOULD
APPLY THEIR PROPOSED POLITICAL-LEGAL CRITERIA TO SPECIFIC
REGIONAL SITUATIONS. FIRST, WHETHER PROPOSED SOVIET
PROHIBITION OF ARMS TRANSFERS TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS
WOULD AFFECT SOVIETS TRANSFERS TO UGANDA AND ETHIOPIA.
SOVIETS (KUZNETSOV) REPLIED THEY WOULD NOT INDULGE IN
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EITHER CRITICISM OR DEFENSE OF IDI AMIN, BUT THERE WERE
NO UN RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS ESTABLISHING HIS REGIME
AS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATOR AS THERE ARE FOR CHILE. BUT IF
TWO SIDES AGREED ON CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM, AND TRANS-
FERS TO UGANDA CONTINUED TO CONCERN US, IT COULD OF
COURSE BE RAISED THROUGH MECHANISM. MATHEWS ASKED IF
SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS CRITERION APPLIED ONLY TO COUNTRIES

IDENTIFIED BY UN AS VIOLATORS AND SOVIETS SAID YES.

2. TURNING TO ETHIOPIA, SOVIETS SAID US VIEW WAS COLORED BY OUR UNFRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES THERE. USSR GUIDED BY CRITERION ON AID TO VICTIMS OF AGGRESSION, WHICH UTTERLY FUNDAMENTAL AND TAKES PRIORITY OVER HUMAN RIGHTS CRITERION. WHEN US CHALLENGED CONCEPT THAT SOME CRITERIA HAD PRIORITY OVER OTHERS, KUZNETSOV BACKED DOWN AND SAID COULD BE ARGUED VIOLATIONS OCCURRED AFTER AGGRESSION. WHEN PRESSED ON HOW DEAL WITH VIOLATOR WHO WAS ALSO VICTIM OF AGGRESSION, KUZNETSOV SAID UN SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD DECIDE.

3. SECOND US QUESTION WAS WHETHER SOVIET CRITERION JUSTIFYING TRANSFERS TO STATES FIGHTING TO ELIMINATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF AGGRESSION HAD ANY TIME LIMIT. AS HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE, IF ECUADOR ATTACKED PERU TO RECOVER TERRITORY LOST IN 1941, WOULD SUPPLIERS BE JUSTIFIED IN TRANSFERS TO ECUADOR? KUZNETSOV SAID CRITERION APPLIED TO EXISTING INTERNATIONAL SITUATIONS, NOTABLY STRUGGLE OF ARAB PEOPLES TO LIQUIDATE RESULTS OF ISRAELI AGGRESSION, RATHER THAN TO HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS. TRANSFERS TO MIDDLE EAST JUSTIFIED WITHOUT TIME LIMIT AS LONG AS ISRAELI OCCUPATION CONTINUED.

4. MATHEWS THEN REPLIED EXTENSIVELY TO SOVIET QUESTIONS
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RAISED AT PREVIOUS MEETING. (1) WE DEFINED SUB-SAHARAN REGION AS ALL OF AFRICA, INCLUDING ISLAND STATES MEMBERS OF OAU, EXCEPT MEDITERRANEAN LITTORAL. (2) WE EXPLAINED THAT WE DID TAKE SOUTH AFRICA (SA) INTO ACCOUNT IN OUR PROPOSALS, NOTING OUR ARMS TRANSFER POLICY TOWARD SA WENT BEYOND UN EMBARGO. (3) RE DEFENSE NEEDS OF FRONT LINE STATES (FLS), WE DISAGREED WITH ASSUMPTION THAT WAY TO MEET NEEDS IS TO ARM THEM UP TO THE LEVEL OF THE MOST HIGHLY ARMED STATE (SA). THAT BECOMES SELF-FULFILLING PRESCRIPTION FOR WAR. (R) WE ALSO TOOK INTO ACCOUNT UN RESOLUTIONS ON SUPPORT FOR THOSE FIGHTING RACISM AND APARTHEID, BUT DID NOT REGARD THOSE AS CALLING FOR MILITARY SUPPORT. (5) WE REGARDED SA AS ADMISSIBLE TO ARMS RESTRAINT EFFORT, AS WE DID ALL STATES OF TWO REGIONS WE HAD PROPOSED. (6) POTENTIAL REACTION OF FLS TO PARALLEL US SOVIET DEMARCHES WE PROPOSED WOULD DEPEND ON SKILL WITH WHICH CARRIED OUT, BUT WE ASSUMED ANY INITIATIVE AIMED AT LIMITING GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN AFRICA WOULD BE WELCOMED BY FLS. (7) REASON FOR OUR PROPOSAL TO LIMIT TRANSFERS OF MOBILE SAMs IS THEIR POTENTIAL USE IN SUPPORT OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS.

5. PRINCIPAL SOVIET COMMENT ON US ANSWERS TO THEIR QUESTIONS RELATED TO FLS. THEY WERE NOT AT ALL SURE FLS REACTION TO PROPOSED DEMARCHE WOULD BE AS POSITIVE AS US IMAGINED, BECAUSE FLS WERE PRECISELY THE AFRICAN STATES THAT NEEDED ADDITIONAL ARMS AND WOULD SEE DEMARCHE AS AIMED AT THEM.

6. KUZNETSOV CONCLUDED MEETING WITH RELATIVELY OBJECTIVE SUMMARY OF RWG'S WORK. SOVIETS AGREED TO "TEMPORARY" CONSIDERATION OF TWO REGIONS PROPOSED BY US, MENTIONING NEED TO DISCUSS OTHERS AS WELL. SOVIETS ACCEPTED VALIDITY OF US RATIONALE THAT ARMAMENT LEVELS RELATIVELY LOW IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA, BUT
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BELIEVED IT ALSO RATIONAL TO CONSIDER THOSE REGIONS WHERE LEVEL OF ARMAMENT CONSIDERABLY HIGHER, WHERE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT HIGHER, AND WHERE INTERESTS OF US AND USSR MORE CLOSELY CONNECTED. IN NEXT ROUND WE WILL TURN TO THOSE REGIONS, BUT NOT TO MIDDLE EAST, WHICH BETTER LEFT TO EXISTING INTERNATIONAL FORA AND POSSIBLY TO OTHER BILATERAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. BOTH SIDES ACKNOWLEDGED USEFULNESS OF DISCUSSIONS IN IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING OF POSITIONS.

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